

# Official offers aid to those fearing asbestos problem

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Staff Writer

**PASSAIC TWP.** — Long after the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has addressed asbestos problems at two sites in Meyersville, the township will still have pockets of asbestos with which to contend.

That was the sentiment expressed recently by police Lt. Donald Van Tassel, who told EPA officials that "there is a longstanding problem here. Passaic Township is asbestos."

The abundance of asbestos, which can cause lung cancer and asbestosis, is the result of residents using asbestos fill provided by National Gypsum, which used to operate a plant on Division Avenue in Millington, officials said. The plant closed down in the early 1970s.

In 1983, the closed asbestos manufacturing plant was deemed a Superfund site by the EPA, with two of its

former Meyersville dumping grounds categorized as satellites of the Superfund site.

Then, two weeks ago, the EPA aroused old concerns by stating that households at the two Meyersville sites faced an "imminent and substantial health threat" from exposure to asbestos, which has been linked to cancer and lung disease.

The EPA posted signs seeking to prohibit access to the properties and urged the households to move out while the EPA did remedial work.

EPA officials also said they would be testing the area within the near future, to determine if there are dangerous amounts of the material in the air.

Residents who suspect that they may have an asbestos problem should contact Nickie DiForte, the chief of the Northern New Jersey Compliance Section of the EPA, at (212) 264-0970.

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## Official

(Continued)

DiForte cautioned that the EPA can only deal with problems connected to the Superfund site. "Under Superfund we will only be able to do what's under our jurisdiction."

Therefore, she noted that "it may not be the EPA that responds to them; it depends on the nature of the problem."

However, she said she could refer residents to agencies, such as the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) or the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), which is a national health organization.

"I can route it to the right people," DiForte said.

Regarding the Meyersville properties, DiForte said Monday that work had begun at the New Vernon Road site owned by Hans Tielman, and that the driveway containing the asbestos would be paved "over the next couple of days."


Meanwhile, at the horse stables on White Bridge Road belonging to Dave Major, "they're going to put a geotextile fabric over" a riding track in which asbestos was found. "It should begin shortly, in the next couple of weeks," she said.

Both sites are considered satellites sites of the Millington Superfund site.

At a special meeting on Thursday, Sept. 20 EPA official Richard Salkie

indicated the agency might put an ad in the paper to tell residents where they could contact the EPA if they discovered an asbestos problem.

When asked about the ad, Salkie said "One of the residents had suggested that, and I thought it was a good idea." He added that while there are no imminent plans to place an ad, if they do "we'd be happy to set up a larger public information session."



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